Pagan Survivals in the Christian Custom of the Lazarines of Aiani

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Colorized photograph of Λαζαρίνις (Lazarinis) on 15 April 1947, as noted on the reverse side. They are probably dancing at Pilikathka t' Alonia (the threshing floors of the Pelekas family). The Church of the Archangels can be seen in the background. On the upper left appears the snow-covered Pierian mountain range, and on the right the corresponding peaks of Mount Olympus. The men depicted staffed the station of the Royal Gendarmerie in the settlement and were present in case of a mobilization raid by guerrillas of the Democratic Army of Greece. Private Collection of Athanassios Kallianiotis

Today, *Λαζαρίνες* (Lazarines) refers to cultural festivities in the settlement of the village Αιανή (Aiani), prefecture of Kozani, Western Macedonia, Greece, held one week before Easter, during which adolescent girls dressed in traditional costumes set out from the Church of the Dormition of the Theotokos and visit homes in groups, offering blessings in exchange for payment. Afterwards, they gather in the village square and dance while singing old songs. This text traces pagan and ancient Macedonian elements concerning life and death that survived beneath a two-thousand-year-old Christian mantle.

Few Were Named Lazarus

In the local dialect of Aiani, formerly called *Κάλιαν*^{η} (Kaliani), an ancient place name derived from the word *καλιά* (kalia), meaning "wooden shrine", the villagers called the custom *ου Λάζαρς* (ou Lazars in the local speech; in standard Greek o Lazaros), the Lazarus. They would say *πάμι στου Λάζαρ*^{η} (Pami stou Lazari: Let

us go to Lazarus), referring to the well-known friend or relative of Jesus who was raised from the dead according to the canonical Gospels. Although the custom was the most important one for women, the baptismal name Lazaros, from which it derived its name, was rare -just as it was in the Roumlouki region of Imathia.

On the plateau of Ελίμεια (Elimeia), where our village Aiani is located, and in the neighboring strip of Σέρβια (Servia), the names Lazar, Lazari, Lazaro, and Lazay are recorded in the 16th century AD. Yet only Lazar Yorgo (Lazarus, son of George) is found in Kaliani, despite the village having 468 households, assuming the translation of the Ottoman registers is entirely accurate. In a monastic register of donors to the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Savior, called *Ζάμπουρντα* (Zabourda in the local dialect), from AD 1692 onward, among 16,587 believers only 24 laymen and 5 clergymen named Lazarus are recorded throughout Western Macedonia (Δυτική Μακεδονία), and none in Kaliani.

Only one person bearing the name appears in an electoral register of 1908 out of a total population of 171 souls, and two in a corresponding register of 1915 out of 199. This rarity suggested at first glance that the custom was Christian only in name. Its core was different, a conclusion strengthened if we examine the song of the *Λαζαρίνις* (Lazarinis), as the girls participating in the custom are called, from the neighboring settlement of Ροδιανή (Rodiani - Tradoubitsa). Entering the church in the morning during these festive days, they would begin with the following lament:

Pouly tachia sikonoumi, mavri ki apou ton ypno,
pairnou nero ki nivoumi, mandili ki sfoungiska
ki akousa lava ki fones, dakrya ki moirgiologia.
Malonei i dafni ki i milia, malonei i dafnopoula.

Translation: Very early tomorrow I rise, darkened even from sleep,
I take water and wash myself, a kerchief and wipe myself clean,
and I heard commotion and cries, tears and lamentations.
The laurel quarrels with the apple tree, the laurel maiden quarrels.

The song recounts the conflict of two plants: one inedible, representing death, and the other fruit-bearing, representing life. Such a conception, when combined with a corresponding song sung by girls of preschool age

irth' ou Lazarous, irthan ta vaia,
pou 'san, Lazari, pou 'san krymmenous?

Lazarus has come, the palm branches have come,
where were you, Lazarus, where were you hidden?

leads us to the cult of the Mother Goddess Cybele. During her rites in Rome at the end of March, a pine trunk bearing a bound effigy of her son Attis, who was partially raised from the dead, was carried in procession to her temple. The initiates of the two deities returned from Hades to the earth rejuvenated.

Temples of Cybele have been identified at the villages Δρέπανο (Drepano - Karatzilar) and Άγιος Δημήτριος (Agios Dimitrios - Toptsilar), figurines of her have been found in our village, and another of her sanctuaries has been discovered at Λευκόπετρα (Lefkopetra) in Ημαθία (Imathia). This region, rich in antiquities and situated on the opposite bank of the Αλιάκμων (Aliakmon) River, abounded in waters, dense vegetation, and a mild climate. In antiquity, the road connecting Άνω Μακεδονία (Upper Macedonia), today Western Macedonia) with Κάτω Μακεδονία (Lower Macedonia - Central Macedonia) passed through this landscape.

Variants of the song are found in the village Λευκοπηγή (Lefkopigi - *Βιλίστ'* - Vilisti), Πολύφυτο (Polyfyto – *Φτύβνιαν'η* - Ftivgiani), and Σκαλοχώρι (Skalohori – *Σκαλουχώρι* - Skalouchori) in Καστοριά (Kastoria). In the first settlement, the verses concern the duality of accepting life and rejecting death, with a woman awakening and wondering whether she had had sexual relations with her husband or with her servants -in the latter case, she wishes that they had not enjoyed her. In the version from Skalohori, the narrative refers to the lamentations of pine trees, beeches, and brigands.

A schoolteacher and distinguished scholar of the folklore of *Βόιο* (Voio), a district of Kozani (Κοζάνη) prefecture, rightly concludes: many of the songs sung by the girls bear no direct relation to the traditional biography of Lazarus. They are, of course, Christian in name; in essence they are much older—perhaps even older than the ancient Greeks themselves.

Fewer Vaies

The female baptismal name *Βάια* (Vaia) is likewise absent from the records: in our village it appears only once in the second recension of the Zabourda register, while no man is recorded under the name Βάιος (Vayos). The word vaia, of Coptic origin, became known through the Gospel of John, when Jesus was greeted with *τὰ βαΐα τῶν φοινίκων* (ta baïa tōn phoinikōn*:* branches of palm trees). Yet the term was unintelligible to Greeks, as is evident from the Alexandrian lexicographer Ησύχιος (Hesychius) around AD 500, since he included it in his lexicon and glossed *βαΐς* (baïs) and *βαΐων* (baiōn) as a palm branch, whereas his Constantinopolitan counterparts, Patriarch Photius (Φώτιος) and the monk Suidas (Σουίδας), were unfamiliar with the word half a millennium later.

Palm trees do not thrive in Western Macedonia because of the climate, and branches are called *κλουνάργια* (klounargia) *i*n our dialect. Instead, we have an abundance of *πυξάρ'* (pyxari: boxwood), ancient Greek *πύξος*: pyxos, with which the *Επιτάφιος* (Epitaph) is decorated today.

The ancient geographer Strabo informs us that the Romans used the term *βαΐα* (baia) to mean a nurse or governess (*τροφός*), apparently pronouncing with a Greek accent the name of the pleasure-loving Campanian city of Baiae, whose inhabitants lived a life of luxury. Yet in Latin a nurse is called nutrix, a view also accepted by the philologist Emmanuel Kriaras, who adds that the word derives from the Italian balia (servant). However, in Aromanian (Vlach) dictionaries vaia is not recorded as meaning "nurse" but rather "laurel" or "mourning woman," evidently influenced by the Latin exclamation of grief vae (alas), corresponding to ancient Greek *παπαί* (papai) and to modern expressions such as "oh dear" or "alas."

Markos Botsaris, a hero of Greek Revolution in 1821 A.D., translates the words *βάγεσε* (vagese) and *βάγε* (vage) as "wet nurse," while in a work by the philologist Nikos Gkinis the form vaje is likewise interpreted as "nurse," meanings probably influenced by Italian. In Albanian, however, vajzë and varzë denote an unmarried girl, rendered as "bali" by the British traveler William Leake. In Καππαδοκία (Cappadocia), vaia referred to a midwife, that is, an experienced and therefore relatively elderly woman.

The word *βάλα* (vala) or *μπάλα* (bala) in Pogoni, Epirus, means a heap or pile, while the Vlach bala corresponds to a large sack. In Voio, a *βαγιός* (vagios) is a man held in esteem, usually because older men, by virtue of experience, are wiser than younger ones. Hesychius supports this interpretation with the gloss *βάγιον* (vagion) = mega ("great, large"), which points us toward Sanskrit, where *vriddha* means "advanced in age." Whatever its precise meaning, the word vaia belongs to a linguistic substratum older than the arrival of Christianity. Beyond the meanings already mentioned, it signified either the one who facilitates the coming of youth into the light, or the one who escorts it into darkness.

Primordial Instincts

Consequently, the naming of the custom as Lazars and the associated vaia constitute a delicate shell enclosing something deeper, if we consider that:

a) the Christian cleric named *Μακεδόνιος* (Macedonius), who died around the sixth century AD in the neighboring settlement of Καισάρεια (Kaisareia – Κισαργιά - Kisargia), was merely a titular, that is, inactive bishop;

b) the early Christian church in the nearby village of Αγία Παρασκευή (Agia Paraskevi – Πρασκιβή - Praskivi), built around AD 700, was allowed to fall into ruin.

The religion arriving from the East was slow to establish itself in the region, and especially slow to impose itself upon everyday life. For this reason, apart from the mass conversions to Islam in surrounding areas brought about by economic pressure, the new faith found it necessary to establish four Christian monasteries in the region: that of the Dormition of the Theotokos within Aiani itself, and three others only a few hours away by horse—the already mentioned *Zabourda*, the Monastery of the Holy Trinity (Λαργιού -Largiou), and the Monastery of the Panagia (Ζντιάν' - Zntiani). The pagan villagers had to be steered according to new rules.

*Teenage Lazarines from Aiani, invited to Kozani in 1961 A.D.[*According to Grigorios Gkourtzoumis*] parade at the city's stadium before local dignitaries. Third from the left is Athanassia Gkalgourana, my aunt's first cousin.* Archive of the Aiani Primary School.

Customs such as *Λάζαρς* (Lazars: Lazarus) had been born millennia earlier because they were indispensable to the human species; they ensured its continuation. Girls rarely appeared in public. Even in the Christian church of their parish they stood apart from the men. They appeared publicly, and all together, only during Lazarus Day, the sole occasion when they could go out without male escort or supervision, whether while visiting houses or dancing in open spaces.

As an elderly *Λαζαρίνα* (Lazarinē) rightly observed: "aftin t' mera olu tou chronou 'n kartirousan ta kouritsia…na ts idoun oi gambroi, oi pitheres, na ts dialexn" (The girls waited for this day all year long... so that bridegrooms and mothers-in-law might see them and choose them [as brides]). At the same time, during the Lazarus festivities the girls indirectly voiced grievances about various matters, such as working conditions, as is revealed by a song sung by the girls of the village of Φρούριο (Frourio – Παλιάλωνα - Palialona – Νιζισκό - Nizisko) as soon as they emerged from church on Sunday:

krypsimi na mi me vrei i roka…
mes ta palikilara, stoun tilou ap' tou vaeni.

Hide me so that the distaff may not find me…
among the old cellars, in the spigot [wooden tap] of the barrel.

The *roka* (distaff used in spinning) was carried by the *Lazarinis*, as they are called in the local dialect, and at the conclusion of the custom it was broken and buried in the village Ελάτη (Elati - Λουζιανή - Louziani), a settlement neighboring Frourio. Who, especially during adolescence, wishes to remain bent over and confined indoors when Nature is bursting forth outside? The claim that men from the village Ακριτοχώρι (Akritochori) in Σέρρες (Serres), dressed in the traditional costume of the Lazarinis and adorned like women, danced with great grace and coquettishness at Σιδηρόκαστρο (Sidirokastro) during the days of the custom has not been independently verified.

By the mid-twentieth century, the girls visited all 300 houses of the village within two days. Since, however, two separate parishes are recorded at the beginning of the century, there were probably more in earlier times, as is suggested by the surrounding churches of Saint George, Saint Paraskevi, and the Prophet Elijah, in whose courtyards cemeteries had been established. This indicates that the adolescent girls attended services at the church of their own parish but afterwards visited every household in the village.

Nevertheless, each residential group preferred its own prospective brides. This helps explain why Aiani became known in medical literature for its unusually large number of hemophiliacs, evidence of relative isolation and a high degree of endogamy.

Separate dances held on threshing floors during the Easter period, accompanied by drums and violins, are indeed mentioned. These, however, apparently did not take place as part of the Lazarus custom itself, since, among other things, they depended upon the villagers' economic circumstances, as the musicians had to be paid either in money or in kind.

Dog Sacrifices

The guardians of Christian doctrine understood that they would more easily attract the rural population if they overlaid pagan festivals with Christian ones in the calendar. Thus, on the first full moon after the spring equinox, when Nature begins to awaken, they placed the Resurrection of Lazarus. This coincided precisely with the months of the ancient Macedonians known as *Ξανδικός* (Xandikos), *Ξαντικός* (Xandikos), *Ξανθικός* (Xanthikos) or *Ξανθός* (Xanthos), and *Αρταμίτιος* (Artamitios), that is, the period of March–April. In Athens, these corresponded to the months Ελαφηβολιών (Elaphebolion) and Μουνιχιών (Munychion).

Xandikos, which country folk would have pronounced *Ξαντκός* (Xantkos) or *Ξουντκός* (Xountkos), also marked the beginning of the campaigning season, as the snows had melted. Military preparations commenced accordingly, particularly under the king Philip II. During the *Ξανδικά* (Xandika), cavalrymen and hoplites performed rites for the dead, offering sacrifices to the deceased and to their shades, honoring their heroes and drawing upon what had now become their chthonic powers. Hesychius glosses the word *ξουθόν* (xouthon), probably from an ancient linguistic substratum, as "sharp" or "keen." It is related to the verb *ξαίνω* (xeno: to scrape or scratch), Doric *κνίσδω* (knisdo), of Indo-European origin from the root *knid*, as in *τσουκνίδα* (tsouknida - nettle). In Photius' lexicon, the verb *ξανάν* (xanan) is explained as the pain women feel in their wrists while carding wool.

As children in the village, we used the word *ξας* (xas) for "you scratch," as in *mi xas ta tsiounga s*' ("don't scratch your hands"). *Ξουθκιές* (Xouthkies) is the name of a location in the Pierian (Πιέρια) Mountains where the people of the village Βελβενδός (Velvendos) placed deities in a cave, while *xothies* -though villagers would likely have pronounced the word *ξουθιές* (xouthies) -according to the Epirote scholar Panagiotis Aravantinos, were mischievous nocturnal spirits . These terms point toward another world: hidden, subterranean, dark, the world associated with death.

During the *Xandika* ceremony in Macedonia -and likewise in Boeotia- the participants passed between the halves of a dog that had been cut in two. First came the weapons of former leaders, then the king and his retinue, and finally the soldiers, who subsequently engaged in mock combat with wooden spears. This custom, regarded today as barbaric and rustic, was known as *περισκυλακισμός* (periskylakismos - passing around the dog), because a dog was sacrificed during the rite. Like Cerberus, the dog served as an intermediary between the worlds of the living and the dead. The sacrifice purified participants from defilement and scraped away all cowardice.

The ritual killing of dogs arose from practical necessities of life. In the village of Palamas in Karditsa, the Lazarinis were accompanied by a related boy called the *σκυλουμάγκου* (skyloumangou*:* dog-lad). He carried a *λούρους* (lourus), a stick used to drive away dogs, whether real or imagined. Likewise, an Easter song from the village Κρανιά (Krania) in Elassona district contains the line: "Ouvraioi gamon ekaman mi ta skyloukefalia (The Jews held a wedding with the heads of dogs).As a means of defense against attacking dogs in Voio, people would join two stones together, kneel, and repeat three times: *otan ginnith'ki ou Christos, skyloukefalou den itan* (When Christ was born, there was no dog's head). Whether the animals actually heard the phrase and fled is possible; what is certain is that they saw a crouching person poised between two potential missiles. The practice is evidently quite ancient, for the Old Testament relates that Abraham placed animals cut in half opposite one another in obedience to his god's command. It is older still, since among the Hittites dogs were considered ritually impure animals.

Thus the custom of purification through dog sacrifice in Macedonia was of great antiquity. It survived, in a largely harmless form, as the hanging of stray animals in villages along the Macedonian–Thessalian frontier until around 1960 -if no dogs could be found, cats took their place. The animals were wrapped with rope and suspended from a makeshift scaffold until they freed themselves by falling to the ground and escaping in distress. I remember such an event taking place before my own eyes in Aiani when I was a child.

A similar custom, though involving cats and occurring a month earlier, took place in the mixed Christian-Muslim settlement of Ανακού (Anakou), modern Kaymaklı in Cappadocia. A cat was placed inside a pot, and people would pretend—according to the author—to burn it, shouting: *eto kata iton Sifotis* (this cat was Sifotis) or *Sifotis efyen* (Sifotis has departed). Sifotis was the foul-smelling chief of the demons of evil. It should also be noted that in the settlement of Τροχός (Trochos) in the same region, boys and girls jumped over bonfires while saying: *kapsame to Sifot'* (we burned Sifotis). According to Hesychius, σιφλόν (*siflon*) means evil, while in Cretan dialect *σεῖφα* (*seifa*) means darkness. If these words are related, then this demon too reaches back into the distant past.

We regarded the wrapping and suspension of the dog as a game, yet it also had practical significance, since stray dogs -enemies of chickens and ducks- ought not to loiter within the settlement or, at the very least, wander about unattended by their masters. We knew nothing of its millennia-old background as an act of the living performed on behalf of the dead. Nor did we know, indeed, no ordinary villager knew that our village had once possessed a temple of the God Pluto on the site where the modern Church of Saint Athanassios stands today; beside it lies the village's sole cemetery. The inscription on a dedicatory stele found there reads: ΘΕΩ ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗ ΠΛΟΥΤΩΝΙ ΚΑΙ ΤΗ ΠΟΛΕΙ ΕΑΝΗ (THEŌ DESPOTĒ PLOUTŌNI KAI TĒ POLEI EANĒ: To the god and master Pluto, and to the city of Aiani. The stele depicts the god holding Cerberus aloft by a chain. The epithet *Δεσπότης* (Despotēs: Master) applied to Pluto is unique in Macedonia. This, in turn, explains the survival of the dog-hanging custom. The existence of Pluto's temple also gave rise to the insulting nickname applied to the inhabitants of Aiani in modern times. The neighboring villages called them *κουρακουγάμδις* (kourakougamdis - raven-fuckers), that is, breeders or mates of ravens, because the raven was associated with the Underworld.

Preschool and school-aged Lazarines at the dance in the square; in the background, the older ones can be distinguished. In the past, the traditional costumes of young girls were entirely white, except for the multicolored braids (gaitania) and the headscarves. Today, other colors are also introduced, such as blue.
Private Collection of Athanassios Kallianiotis.

The month *Αρταμίτιος*, *Αρτεμισιών* (Artemision) in Ionic cities and Munychion) in Athens, was dedicated to Artemis, goddess of the hunt. Sanctuaries of *Ηρακλής Κυναγίδας* (Heracles Kynagidas - Heracles the Hunter) were common in Elimeia, a region rich in wildlife. My father hunted roe deer, partridges, and hares, which were abundant there, while the last deer of the area was killed in the early twentieth century.

In Athens, during this month, girls processed to a sanctuary of Apollo and Artemis to offer prayers for the salvation of the maidens destined for the Minotaur. A boat race of youths followed, forming part of military training, a custom comparable to Macedonian practices. It is therefore evident that the sacrifice of the dog,

that is, the cult of the deceased heroes of the Macedonians, and the corresponding supplication to Artemis on behalf of girls destined for sacrifice were overlaid by the laments sung for Lazarus. The exact hymns with which the ancient Macedonians sought to ward off death remain unknown to this day.

The mock battles of the Macedonians and the boat races of the Athenians survived in the wrestling contests of the youths of Polyfyto outside the church on 23 April, and in the various athletic competitions held by the young men of Εράτυρα (Eratyra - Seltsa) in Voio outside a rural chapel on the second day of Easter. In Επταχώρι (Eptachori - Bourboutsko) of Kastoria, April was considered a dangerous month, and people sought to ward it off with the song: ...

Aprili m', fontas sevikis, kana kalo den eida…
Ta palikargia arrostisan, den bouroun na perpatisoun,
den bouroun na syroun t' armata, ta erima tsabrazia...

My April, since you arrived, I have seen no good...
The young men have fallen ill and cannot walk;
they cannot carry their weapons, their wretched ornaments.

A legacy of these mock battles and preparations for war can also be seen in the ritual striking of believers with the distributed vaia branches outside churches, among women in Laconia and among children in Ελαφότοπος (Elafotopos) of Epirus during the festive period under discussion.

τσιντζιρό γαϊτάνι (tsintziro gaitani)

The dance of the Lazarinis of Aiani on Palm Sunday begins with a song today known as *Τσιντζιρό* (Tsintziro), from the first word of its opening verse. Its theme is as follows: an adolescent girl, richly adorned with golden braid and silver buttons, has lost her amulet and asks her companions whether any of them have found it and will return it to her. They swear, however, by the crown and the moon that they have not found it:

Tsintziro gaitani, maikou m', ki argyro koumpi.
Echasa tou chaimali mou, poia tou, poia tou vrikiti?
San tou vrikis, mor' Vasilou, dos' mas tou na zīeis.
– Ma tou stemma, tou fengari, den tou vrika igo, mor, den tou vrika igo!

[I wear] golden braid, mother mine, and a silver button.
I have lost my amulet; which of you found it?
If you found it, Vasiliki, give it back to me and may you live long.
– By the crown and by the moon, I did not find it, no, I did not find it!

The song is sung almost identically in the neighboring settlement of Kato Komi (Vantsa Katni), except that the questioned girl is named Ματίνα (Matina) instead of Vasiliki, and the oath is sworn by the star rather than the crown:

Tsintziro gaitani, maikou m', ki argyro koumpi.
Echasa tou chaimali mou, poia tou, poia tou vrikiti?
San tou vrikis, mor' Matina, dos' mas tou na zīeis.
– Ma tou astrou, tou fengari, den tou vrika igo, mor, den tou vrika igo.

[I wear] golden braid, mother mine, and a silver button.
I have lost my amulet; which of you found it?

If you found it, Matina, give it back to me and may you live long.
– By the star and by the moon, I did not find it, no, I did not find it.

The names of the girls being questioned differ from village to village, probably depending on the girl leading the dance at that particular moment or the one most splendidly dressed. Yet the Vasilou (Vasiliki) of Aiani likely carries a special significance.

Adornment of modern Lazarinis of Aiani before putting on the ornaments worn on the chest and the headscarves (tsibergia) and setting out for the Tsintziro dance.
Private Collection of Athanassios Kallianiotis.

In Καρυδίτσα (Karyditsa - Spourta), the negative oath is absent. The refrain initially contains *μάικου* (maikou: my mother), and later the affectionate or respectful form of address *τζιάνουμ* (tzianoum), from Persian *jān* and *jānam* (my soul), where jān means "spirit," comparable to Greek *anemos* (breath) and Latin *animus*. It may be noted here that this form of address, *jan*, perhaps influenced the popular Greek form *Γιάννης* (Yiannis, or Giannis - John) from the Hebrew name Yōḥannan, rendered in learned Greek as *Ιωάννης* (Ioannis) and in everyday speech as *Γιάννης* (Yiannis), or *Γιαντς* (Yiants) in the village dialect, resembling the Persian *jan*. In Karyditsa say:

Tsintziro gaitani, maikou m', ki argyro koumpi.
Echasa tou chaimali, mor' tzianoum, poia tou vrikiti?
San tou vrikis sy, mor' tzianoum, dos' mou to na zīeis.

[I wear] golden braid, mother mine, and a silver button.
I have lost my amulet, my dear soul; which of you found it?
If you found it, my dear soul, give it back to me and may you live.

A variant reads: ...Lazarinina echasi mandili, ki tou vrik' ou Yiannis. Do' m' tou.. (A Lazarinē lost her kerchief, and John found it. Give it back to me...)

In Κρόκος (Krokos - Gkomblitsa), the oath is sworn by *Θχιο* (thchio: God), and the singers say *τσίντζινου γαϊτάνι* (tsintzinou gaitani) and *τζιάνουμ* tzianoum instead of *μάικου μ΄* (maikou m'). The use of tzianoum is explained by the village's proximity to settlements of immigrant Turks before the population exchange, while its closeness to Kozani—a bishopric seat in the eighteenth century—meant that the oath *μα του Θχιο* (ma tou Thchio: by God) was regarded as suitably Christian:

Kapou kinisa na panou, tzianoum, kapou kinisa.
Tsintzinou gaitani, tzianoum, tsintzinou gaitani ki argyro koumpi, mor' tzianoum.
Echasa tou chaimali mou, tzianoum, poia tou vrikiti?
Tou vrikis sy, mor' tzianoum, mi tou vrikis sy?
– Den tou vrika igo, mor' tzianoum, ki argyro koumpi, ma tou Thio, ma tou fengari.

I set out to go somewhere, my dear soul, somewhere I set out.
Golden braid, my dear soul, golden braid and a silver button, my dear soul.
I have lost my amulet, my dear soul; which of you found it?
Did you find it, my dear soul, was it you who found it?
– I did not find it, my dear soul, by God and by the moon.

In the Visaltia region of Serres, the Lazarinis sing *tziana m' yasatzi* (my soul, may you live), where yasatzi derives from the turkish yaşa (live). But in Agia Paraskevi and Karyditsa, there is instead mention of a "lost kerchief" found by John, without any accompanying oath. The significance of the name John has already been discussed above:

Kapchia Lazarinina, exassi mantili
ki tou brik' ou Yiannis, dos tou Yianni, dos tou.

"Some Lazarina lost a scarf
and John found it, give it back, John, give it back.

Further away, in the mountainous Λιβαδερό Livadero - Mokrou), it is sung with questions of discovery directed either to *Μάρου* (Maroy: Maria) or to Yiannis, which culminate in the preparation of a cannabis-leaf pie, psychotropic, rather than the corresponding one made with nettles:

Tsinizilou, gaitayanou maikou, tsinizilou ki asimokoupa.
Na min tou vrikis, mor' Marou, dos' tou, dos' tou mas na ziis.·
Den tou vrika, mor' kouritsia, den tou loiasa. Nikou.[2]

Golden cord, my mother, golden cord and a silver cup.
Did you perhaps find it, Maria, give it, give it to us, and may you live long.
- I did not find it, girls, I didn't think [about finding it].

And in a variation: Idou sin tout' ti strata, si tout' tou mounoupati,
idou 'chasa chryso gaitani, na min tou vrikis, Yianni?
Gia do' m' tou, do' m' tou, Yianni, gia na si fkiasou pitta,
pitta kanavouropta ki as ein' ki tsouknidopta

Here on this road, on this path,
Here I lost a golden cord, did you perhaps find it, John?
Do give it to me, give it to me, John, so I can make you a pie,
A cannabis-seed pie, even if it is a nettle pie.

In Μικρόβαλτο (Mikrovalto - Mkrovaltou) it is roughly the same without reference to the material of the cord, but with a clear specification that it was lost on a road or on a path.

Idou s’ afti ti strata, stou stino tou mounoupati,
echasa gaitani, na mi tou vrikis, Yianni?
Si alli mi tou dozeis, do’ m' tou, do’ m' tou, Yianni.

Here on this road, on the narrow path,
I lost a cord, did you perhaps find it, John?
Do not give it to another woman, give it to me, give it to me, John.

But in a short film, it is recorded with a slightly altered version:

Idou si afti ti strata, si afto tou mounoupati,
echasa tou gaitani, na mi tou vrikis, Yianni?
Gia dos´ tou m’, Yianni, gia na si fkiasou pita,
pita kanavouropta, ki as ein’ ki tsouknidopta.

In the neighboring settlement of Kaisareia, near Aiani, the *Lazarinis* sing a song of which the writer only heard a part and not in a clear performance. It resembles those of the mountainous settlements and not the corresponding one of our village, probably due to the tension that existed between the two settlements regarding land estates and pastures, and because the aforementioned settlements, in order to go to the metropolis of Kozani (Koziani), passed through Kaisareia and not through Aiani; thus, the song of the former was preferred, namely:

Kapou kinisa na paou, tou ntoiminou[?]
stou stino tou mounoupati…

Somewhere I started to go, tou ntoiminou[?]
On the narrow path…

In Δρυμός (Drymos), Elassona district, the cord is specified as a wire cord, woven with nine kinds of wire and wrapped with ten a wire cord, woven with nine kinds of wires and wrapped with ten, meaning sewn with metallic threads onto the clothes, shiny braids with which the *Lazarinis* decorated their vests in Polyfyto. Relatively far from Aiani, in the villages of Δάσκιο (Daskio: Ntriatsko: Ntriatskou), logically in the local dialect) and Ριζώματα (Rizomata: Bostiani) of the Pieria mountains, identical oaths exist a similarity explained by the chthonic cults: in Aiani, the temple of Pluto, and in Daskio opposite, the corresponding temple of Cybele-Attis:

Na pou do ´chasa gaitani, sirviro gaitani,
san tou vrikis, mori Yianni,
dos´ mas tou, mataki m´, dos’ mas tou, kardouli m´.
- Den tou vrika, ma toun iliou ki ma tou figgari

Somewhere here I lost a cord, a silver or embroidered cord,
if you found it, John, give it to us,
my little eye (my dear), give it to us, my little heart.
- I did not find it, swear by the sun and swear by the moon.

The Original Source

Although it is not easy to identify the original source of the songs because of the multitude of common verses and characters, for example, the loss of the braid and the questions addressed to John as to whether he found it are also sung in Grevena and Kalambaka the first verse, “tsintziro gaitani ki argyro koubi” (golden

braid and silver button), belongs to the plateau of Elimeia. It is also found in the Pierian Mountains because of the road that passed through the area and connected it with Imathia, a mule track that started from Aiani and Kaisareia, crossed the river at the ford of Goulas, and then continued along the right bank of the Aliakmon River toward Velvento, Polyfyto, Daskio, Rizomata, Πολυδέντρι (Polydendri), and Βεργίνα (Vergina).

Furthermore, after the arrival and permanent settlement of the Ottomans, inhabitants of Elimeia moved to the mountainous areas due to pressure or in order to (temporarily) avoid taxation by establishing new homesteads, clearing land, and maintaining domestic animals. This explains the founding of the village of Καταφύγι (Katafygi -Katafy) in the Pieria Mountains and the population increase of the villages of Daskio and Rizomata, since in 1530 AD the former had only four households and the latter twelve.

The song of Aiani and the neighboring settlements speaks of γαϊτάνι (gaitani), that is, the embroidery of garments with all kinds of thread. Kriaras considers the word to be of Latin origin. However, in Arabic, خيط (khayt) means "thread" or "cord." Hesychius records the Boeotian gloss καιέτα (kaieta) = calamint, which contains the element referring to a (thin) reed and the pre-Greek suffix -nthos. If gaitani does not belong to an older linguistic substratum, then it entered Greece during the Byzantine period and spread through the highly skilled Vlach tailors who sewed it onto garments, either as a sign of wealth or, more practically, to prevent fraying. Silver, golden, or red embroidered braids, as well as golden lace (tsoupari di chrysafi), were highly desired by the Vlach women of Χιονοχώρι (Chionochori) in Serres. The most expensive ones were purchased from Constantinople.

To understand the adjective tsintziro, we must visit India. In the language of the Punjab region (the "Land of Five Rivers"), the word for chain is pronounced janjir. In Middle Persian it is zanjīr, in Egyptian Arabic gandzir, and in Turkish zincir, exactly as in Albanian and Bulgarian. Yet tsintzifi was the village term for the embroidered trimming at the hem of the skirt worn by the *Lazarinis*, while tsintzifou referred to an excessively adorned woman.

The jujube shrub (*τζιτζιφιά* - tzitzifia) was called *ζίζυφον* (zizyphon) in ancient Greek, a word of Proto-Indo-European origin, and its ripe edible fruits have a reddish-brown color, resembling copper in the early stages of oxidation. The gloss recorded by Hesychius, *ζίγνις* (zignis) = "copper-colored lizard," probably referring to the species Chalcides ocellatus, a reptile whose scales have a coppery color, that is, a dull golden hue, leads us to the hypothesis that the word is also connected with a very ancient Mediterranean substratum. The term became established in the West as *Zink* ("zinc") through the Swiss alchemist Theophrastus Paracelsus, who had studied Strabo, particularly his reference to the zinc mines of the Troy region, known in Turkish as Balya. These mines were known as Μπάλια (Balia) among inhabitants of our village who worked there in the early twentieth century.

The word reached us as τσίγκια (tsingia - sheet metal") and τσιγκαλίδγια (tsingalidgia - metal ornaments). It also survives in surnames: Τσίγγανας (Tsinganas) in Aiani, Τσιγγινές (Tsingines) in Rodiani, and Τσιγγενόπουλος (Tsiggenopoulos) in Daskio. In Γρεβενά (Grevena) *τζιντζιλίζου* (tsintzilizou) means "to produce a metallic sound," while in Voio the verb *τσιντζιλίζ*^{ει} (tsintziliz') is used when the sun shines and burns intensely, that is, when it is deep red or golden. Here clearly belongs the children's verse from a Lazarus song of the village Κουβούκλια (Kouvouklia) in Bursa, now in Turkey:

Tzingil, tzingil vitaos
t' alonia koita,
dos' to kotsavoudi m' pita.

Little metal thing, little metal thing, Vita,
look toward the threshing floors,
give my little puppy a pie."

In Cappadocia, on Palm Sunday (*Vagia Pazari,* as they called it), young people sang outside the houses:

Vagia, vagia, voutsika,
echo tria voutsikes,
to ’na tsizninoutsiko,
to ’na prasinoutsiko…

The author translates the predicate *τσιζνινούτσικο* (tsizninoutsiko) as “blue,” but in a dictionary of the same region the word does not exist. The possibility that its first component is tsizni and derives from the Turkish çivit (“deep blue color”) does not fit the meaning. More likely is its relationship with our own tsintziro, so that one of the palm branches held by the narrator is yellowish, “tsizninoutsikos,” while the other is pale green, “prasinoutsikos.” Thus, the song may be translated:

“Palms, palms, little palms,
I have three little palms,
one is golden,
the other greenish.”

Therefore, the adjective τσιντζιρό (tsintziro) denotes a quality rather than a shape—the color of the thread, namely gold. In Aramaic, *ṭangīrā* means “cooking pot.” In our village, a single such vessel was called ο τσέντζιαρς (tsentziars), while several similar ones were called τσιντζιρέδγια (tsintziregdia). Larger vessels, such as cauldrons, were referred to by the elders as χαλκώματα (chalkomata - copperware). In Eratyra they are called the one τσιντζιρές, the two τσιντζιρέδγια (tsintzires – tsintziredgia). Furthermore, in the song of the *Lazarinis* the pair unfolds as tsintziro gaitani (“golden braid”) and argyro koubi (“silver button”), a pairing that also appears in Livadero as “golden braid and silver cup.”

Lazarines, married and unmarried, in front of the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, heading to the square where they will dance. The light blue color of the traditional costumes is dominant. Private Collection of Athanasios Kallianiotis

In Daskio and Rizomata they sing sirviro gaitani, an adjective that the author or editor of a related work explains as “embroidered.” In sixteenth-century Bulgarian, strembro meant “silver,” comparable to German *Silber*. However, in the neighboring villages of Ρητίνη (Ritini) and Ελατοχώρι (Elatochori) of Peria,

σειραδώνου (seiradonou) means “I sew the hem of a dress,” a verb derived from the ancient word σειρά (seira), σηρά (sira) in Doric, meaning “rope” or “chain,” while according to Photius, zeira was a type of belt. The verb is analyzed as seira plus deo (“to bind”), meaning “to tie together the edges of garments with threads.” Practicality rather than ornamentation was the primary concern of rural people, so there was probably an adjective sirdino meaning “bound with threads,” which the Vlach tailors, who also worked in the Bulgarian-speaking villages of the Imathia plain, likely pronounced as sirviro.

The view that the nominal phrase sirviro or tsintziro gaitani belongs to earlier linguistic substrata is supported by the next line of the song, argyro koubi (“silver button”): argyros means “silver” in ancient Greek and is of Proto-Indo-European origin, while according to Hesychius, komboma means “ornament” and skiroma denotes something hard, such as a button. Gold together with silver was especially desired in the velvet belt of the *Lazarinis*, adorned with silver buttons, called thlykia in the local dialect.

The fact that the adolescent girls wear blue costumes is also significant. According to Leake, blue was the color of brides and is frequently found in Mycenaean and Minoan frescoes. One female figure in particular—either a priestess or a goddess holding ears of grain—is depicted wearing a blue tunic, a dual declaration of fertility.

Naturally, not all girls danced in the central Palm Sunday dance, because they did not possess expensive costumes. My mother, for example, never danced; she was extremely poor and had neither a costume nor jewelry. In support of this, the following is reported about the Turkish-speaking Christian settlement of Prokopi, today’s Ürgüp in Cappadocia: *Pashalia detigin pir boyuk hara,parasi olmayana, pir boyuk bela* (The Easter season, as they say, is a day of great joy;[but] for the one who has no money, it is a great burden).

Melodic Turns

The internal refrain maikou in the central song of the *Lazarinis*—Bulgarian *майка* (maika) meaning “mother”—is the result of estrangement or deliberate foreignization, intended to make the song appear more exotic. In Krokos, as we have seen, the Persian janam is used, while in Pieria the forms mataki (“little eye”) and kardouli (“little heart”) occur. The invocation of foreign girls is common, for example Frankitsa (“little French girl”), with a particular preference for Vourgáres (Bulgarian women), a term used for women considered nervous and stubborn, but also exceptionally beautiful. In Elati, a song began: Vourgára séri tou choró, Vourgára tragoudáei (A Bulgarian woman leads the dance, a Bulgarian woman sings). Yet one of the *Lazarinis* was known within the custom as “the Romanian.”

In Kosovo, the *Lazarinis* sing:

Jeleno, Solun devojko, Ne diži glavu visoko,
dosta si sama visoka:
slika ti Solun dovaća,
i solunačke ofčare!

Jelena, girl of Thessaloniki,do not raise your head so high,
you are already tall enough on your own;
your beauty reaches as far as Thessaloniki
and even to the shepherds of Thessaloniki!

Μάκου (Makou) or *μπάμπου* (bampou) means “grandmother” in the village Λουτρό (Loutro) of Elassona, although it is unknown exactly when one term was used and when the other. Nevertheless, the word makou

existed in the village since antiquity, because this was the Doric term for the psychoactive poppy, officially known as *μήκων η υπνοφόρος* (mēkōn hē hypnophoros - sleep-bearing poppy), the seed capsules of which were boiled and whose decoction was drunk as a sedative or sleeping aid until the middle of the twentieth century AD. Thereafter, the authorities prohibited its cultivation and use, because they could not impose a tax upon it and because they wished to regulate the mental state of their subjects.

Since the Bulgarian-speaking villages were somewhat distant from Aiani, the word maikou did not sound strange to the local ear. Could it be that the ancient Macedonians also used makou in their sacred rituals? This is unknown, but it is certain that they consumed it as a medicinal remedy. Things unknown at close hand are often regarded as attractive.

The names by which the dancers are addressed refer, one after another, to participants in the custom. In other villages, however, they ask John, a man standing outside the dance and an indefinite figure, since John is numerically the most common male given name in Greece. Moreover, John, Greek Yiannis rhymes with gaitani (braid), Yanni – gaitani and, as already noted, resembles the Persian *jan*.

The Pagan Amulet

The dancers have lost their gaitani, that is, the embroidered ornament attached to the belt, which was fastened over the womb, or the kerchief attached to the same place. In Aiani, however, where the Lazarinis additionally wear a silver cross on the left side of their costume and an amulet on the right, they have lost something even more precious: their amulet, called haimali in the local dialect. This word comes from the ancient Near East, for in Aramaic it is *kamea* and in Arabic *ḥamāya*.

What has been lost is not the Christian cross but something more primordial—the amulet itself, protection against chthonic powers. The existence of the Temple of Pluto has already been mentioned, a sanctuary that, according to a descending topographical scheme, begins with Mount Olympus, visible east of Aiani and the dwelling place of the celestial gods. In the lower Pierian Mountains there existed the worship of the lesser *xouthkia*—fairy-like beings in a sense—while in the much lower-lying Aiani dwelt the subterranean spirits.

My grandmother had prepared an amulet for me, enclosed within a sewn white cloth pouch. I never opened it to see what it contained. It was not Christian; it came from the abyss of the ages.

Whether it protects me has not been proven. Yet.

A teenage Lazarina smiles for the camera. Today's Lazarines no longer wear a cross on their chest, let alone protective amulets.
Private Collection of Athanasios Kallianiotis.

The Oath of Nature

An equally interesting element in the song, perhaps the most interesting of all, is the sworn denial that the lost amulet, braid (gaitani), or kerchief has not been found. In Elati, it is a kerchief. In Daskio, Rizomata, and Aiani, the participants do not swear by the God of the desert, nor by Jesus, nor by the Holy Spirit, but rather by ancient powers of Nature: the sun, that is, the (solar?) crown, and together with it the moon. In Krokos, as

already mentioned, they swore by the thchio ("god") and the moon, perhaps because in the eighteenth century the Christian bishopric had moved from Servia to the town of Kozani, and thus, being only a few kilometers away, the bishop exercised more effective authority over the settlement.

Beneath the reference to the crown, as well as the form of address Vasilou (Vasiliki), we may detect a memory of the crowned kings of Macedonia and a reference to their dynastic emblem, the sixteen-rayed star, that is, the sun which Περδίκκας (Perdiccas), ancestor of Φίλιππος Β΄) Philip II, is said to have traced upon the ground and taken with him. In Aiani, part of a mold for skyphoi has been found depicting a sun god or another figure from whose head sixteen rays emerge. A loom weight bearing eleven corresponding rays has also been discovered.

If these finds are associated with a cult image unearthed in the Church of the Dormition of the Theotokos—probably representing the goddess Ελευθώ (Eleutho), whose head is adorned with approximately twenty-eight serrated rays, then birth associated with the sun and darkness associated with death, both primordial forces, were worshipped simultaneously, the former serving to ward off the latter.

The Jumping of the Baking Dome

The scene in which the *Lazarinis* jump, on the eve of Lazarus Saturday or in Kaisareia, one week earlier three times over an overturned γάστρα (gastra - a hemispherical metal baking cover blackened by use), resting upon a *πυρουστχιά* (pyrousthia - a tripod used for cooking), containing a *προυσφώλ'* (prousfoli - an old egg left in the hens' nest to encourage egg-laying), and a *λάπατου* (lapatou), wild cabbage, is particularly striking.

Whichever girl touches these objects during the leap is believed to turn yellow like the egg, and her body will smell like it. She will also become green like the cabbage and black like the baking dome. Altogether, she will die. This primordial superstition is connected with present bodily vigor and health.

Afterward, the egg and the cabbage are thrown into *ζίγρις* (zigris - wild blackberry bushes). In Agia Paraskevi, the egg is secretly buried in the fields a week earlier. In Krokos, the ritual takes place on the Fourth Sunday of Lent, and the objects, regarded as a source of pollution, are buried at a place called Άργανου (Arganou). In Eratyra, as elsewhere, the Easter egg that had been kept in the household icon shrine was buried on April 23 in a field, vineyard, or at the root of a fruit-bearing tree. In Visaltia, the girls buried a flower from their hair and, if they possessed one, a small coin. In the lowland settlements of Trikala and Karditsa, the Lazarus sticks and their flowers were cast into the river.

The words involved are ancient Greek. Hesychius records the gloss *γαστρόπτης* (gastroptēs - meaning "a type of cooking vessel) in relation to the gastra, while zigris derives from *ζωγρώ* (zogrō -to capture), fittingly enough, since the thorns of blackberry bushes indeed pierce sharply. If the place-name Arganou derives from όργιον (orgion - sacred rite), then the burial occurred in the appropriate location.

Furthermore, among rustic Macedonians today the expression γένι άργανου (geni arganou) means "become an instrument," effectively, "you are not wanted." Just as the birth of a sickly child is not desired. The breaking and burial of a spinning distaff also took place in Elati, at a place called *Αμπδί* (Abdi) or *Γαβριά* (Gavria), and if the former name is related to the verb αποδιώκω (to drive away), then it too was a fitting location.

In Aiani, this leap is recorded in formal language as "the jumping of the gastra," but the *Lazarinis* themselves probably say *pami n' arichtoumi t' gastra* (let us go and jump over the gastra). In Agia Paraskevi, the practice is described as "playing the game with the roof tile," in the local dialect *pami n' arichtoumi 'n keramida* (let

us go and jump over the tile), or as "the jumping of the tripod," *pami n' arichtoumi n pyrousthia*. In Krokos it is known as "making the egg-skin," probably pronounced *pami na fkiásoumi 'n avgoptsa* (let us go and make the egg-skin), where avgoptsa means the membrane or shell of a boiled egg.

Lazarines ready to jump over a gastra (baking dome), resting on a tripod, which contains an egg and a patience dock (lapato). This constitutes a survival of fire worship, childbearing, and the fertility of Nature. Private Collection of Athanasios Kallianiotis.

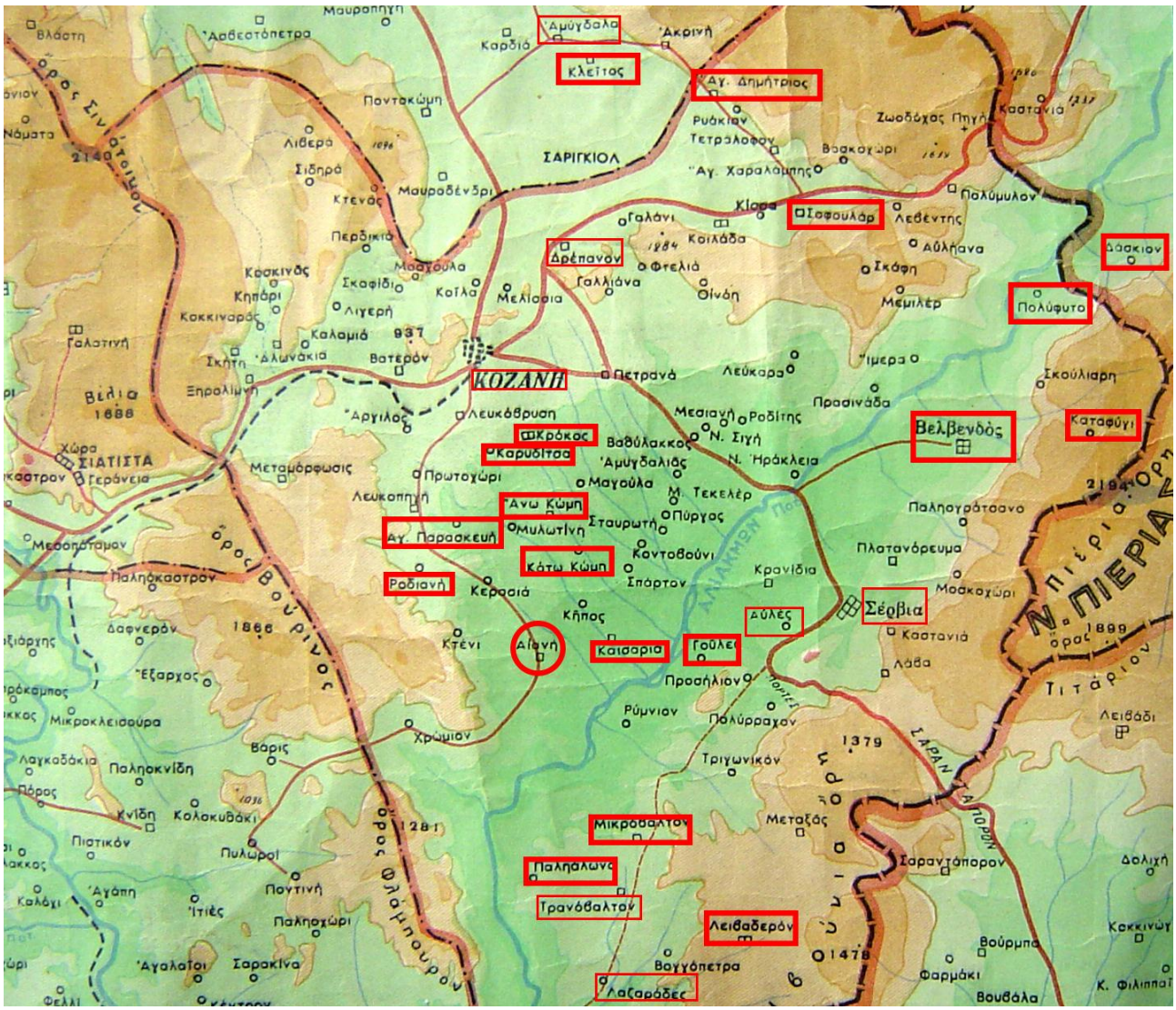
This scene of jumping over objects placed on the ground is attested only in Elimeia. In the village of Κτίσματα (Ktismata) in Ioannina, an overturned tripod and the egg from the icon shrine are placed outside in the courtyard to prevent destructive hailstorms. The egg is later buried in the fields for the same protective purpose.

A similar act of leaping over fire, specifically pine-wood fires, was practiced not only by people but also by all the animals of a household during epidemics in the village of Δεσπότης (Despotis -Snichovo) in Grevena. This was done for purification and healing, though without the baking dome, egg, or cabbage.

The old egg, together with the cabbage, signifies death. The philosopher Democritus wrote that lapathoi were the pits dug by hunters, covered with brushwood and dust, into which hares would fall. By throwing away or burying the egg and cabbage in a place from which they could not easily be recovered, the *Lazarinis* were exorcising death itself.

The act resembles the ancient curse tablets buried underground -the most famous being the curse tablet of Pella -as well as comparatively recent examples from Voio, where a sorceress, seeking to bind a fellow villager, drove three nails high into a tree so that they would not be discovered.

The act of leaping over the gastra, a tool associated with fire, ultimately leads us back to the Proto-Indo-European tradition of fire worship. In Malomirovo, Bulgaria, *Lazarinis* were recorded in 1946 dancing and singing around a fire; they likely jumped over it as well.



Detail from a map of Western Macedonia showing Elimeia, later known as Tsiartsiambas, and subsequently the Province of Kozani. Aiani is marked with a circular outline, while the settlements mentioned in the text are indicated by rectangles. In the upper right appears Daskio, a village that today belongs administratively to Imathia, a region visited by the inhabitants of Elimeia by following the southern bank of the Aliakmon River. Skerkemis Lambros, Western Macedonia, Gkavanas Publishing, Kozani, 1951.

Tsiartsiambas

The Lazarus rites did not impress all of the

Detail from a map of Western Macedonia showing Elimeia, later known as Tsiartsiambas, and subsequently the Province of Kozani. Aiani is marked with a circular outline, while the settlements mentioned in the text are indicated by rectangles. In the upper right appears Daskio, a village that today belongs administratively to Imathia, a region visited by the inhabitants of Elimeia by following the southern bank of the Aliakmon River. Skerkemis Lambros, Western Macedonia, Gkavanas Publishing, Kozani, 1951.

Ottomans who had taken possession, without resistance, of the fortress of Servia at the end of the fourteenth century AD and subsequently settled permanently in Elimeia. This was because a significant number of them, as evidenced by the dervish tekkes in the villages of Χαραυγή (Charavgi - Tzouma), Agios Dimitrios, and Καπνοχώρι (Kapnochori – Sofoular), sites that had previously been Macedonian and later Christian

sanctuaries—were Bektashis. In other words, they were heterodox believers who wove together, upon a Persian canvas, pagan, Gnostic, Shiite, and Christian elements. For example, Bektashi women worshipped in the same space as men, did not wear veils, drank wine, and visitors of any religion could eat there free of charge. Naturally, the Janissaries, Islamized Christians, were members of the Bektashi order.

An inscription discovered at the site of the tekke in Kapnochori revealed that it had once been an ancient Greek sanctuary. As for the corresponding shrine in Charavgi, it was said to have been built upon a former church dedicated to the Prophet Elijah. This is plausible, since during the pre-Islamic-origin festival of *Hıdırellez* among Alevis and Bektashis, the Prophet Elijah meets the mysterious servant of the Islamic God, Al-Khidr (the Green One). During *Hıdırellez*, celebrated in April, people jumped over fires and buried money beneath rose bushes in hopes of happiness and abundance.

At these establishments, people divined the fate of absent relatives by means of a suspended egg, a practice that recalls the discarded eggs of the *Lazarinis*. Their sanctuaries were also visited by Christian women, usually on Wednesdays (*Çarşamba* in Turkish) or Saturdays, in order to obtain holy water for healing or fertility. The fact that *Hıdırellez*, as a festival of purification through fire-jumping and wish-making, more generally a spring festival, roughly corresponding to
- the Macedonian *Xandikos*,
- the Iranian *Chaharshanbeh Suri* (Festive Wednesday of Fire)
- the Balkan Romani *Ederlezi*,

gives rise to the following hypothesis:

The Bektashis, seeing the *Lazarinis* jump over the gastra containing the egg and cabbage, perhaps in earlier times over actual fires, observing that women visited them on Wednesdays, and knowing that the Persians celebrated a similar festival on a Wednesday, named the plateau Çarşamba.

In local village speech we pronounced this as *στουν Τσιαρτσαμπά* (stoun Tsiartsiamba - in Tsiartsiamba). The earliest written attestation of the name, however, dates to 1797, when it appears as *Τζερτζαπά* (Tzertzaba).

It is noteworthy that in Eratyra, during the Easter period and in the evening hours, a girl carries a lit tuft of wool attached to a stick as a torch while a closing song of the festivities is sung, known elsewhere as well, though without reference to Wednesday:

Irthin i Titarti, ap' na min erchountan.
T' armata eini xena ki tha mas ta parouni,
parte ta dikelia sas na pate ki st' ambelia sas.

Wednesday has come, if only it had not.
Our ornaments are borrowed, and they will take them back.
Take your mattocks and go to your vineyards.

In various communities of Cappadocia, Saint George was also called Ai Chintirele or Chintirelle. He was the one who slew the dragon that devoured young men and women, a motif reminiscent of Theseus and the Minotaur. The women wore wreaths of wildflowers, danced outside the church, and received crimson kerchiefs as gifts. The men hung amulets upon pack animals, while the girls constructed effigies of camels which they later burned. Sick children were passed through the hollow opening of a large tree in the belief that they would be healed.

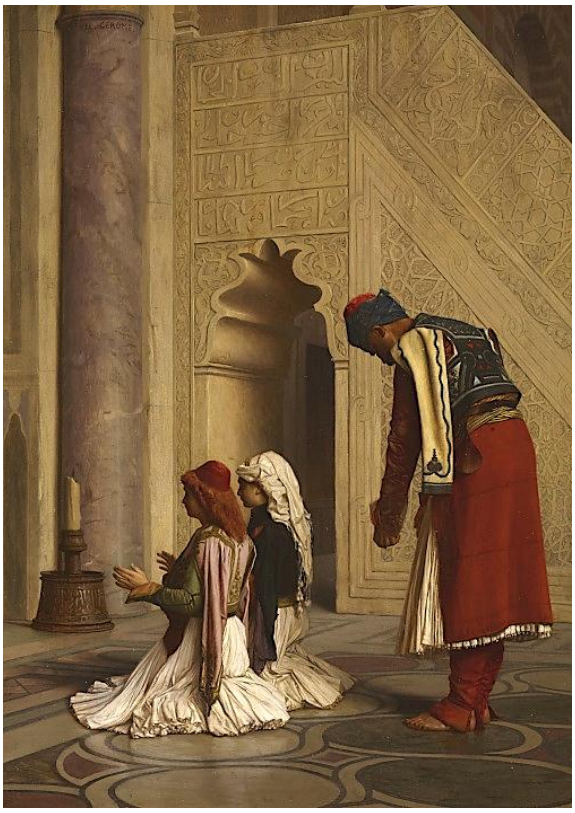
How many common elements these places share!

The Fear of the Turks

The rhythms of the *Lazarinis*' songs vary: they are fast when sung while moving and slow during a stationary dance, such as in Aiani, where the dance pattern consists of five movements. The rhythms also depend upon the costume. In our village, the costume was extremely heavy because of Ottoman rule, especially during periods of crisis, so that the female body would not be discernible beneath it. As a song from Krania in Elassona concerning the conscription of Christian boys into the Janissary corps states:

Stin Alassona, tzianou m', ki stou pazari
xevgike i Sklavous, tzianou m', pedia mazonei,
pedia mazonei tzianou m', ki aspra den pairi,
mon' pairi tou Yianni, tzianou m', ki 'n kali t'.

In Elassona, my dear, in the marketplace,
the slave-taker has come out, my dear, gathering children;
he gathers children, my dear, and takes no silver coins;
he takes only Yannis, my dear, and his beloved.



Young Greek Janissaries in a Muslim mosque. Janissaries were the sons of Christian families who were recruited by the Ottoman authorities to serve as the Sultan's guards or as members of the imperial administration. Many were associated with the Bektashi order, a practice that was considered natural given their origins and the distinct cultural and religious environment in which they were raised and served.. Γενίτσαροι, Wikipedia

Epilogue

Certain words have been written in the local dialect rather than exactly as they appear in books, websites, or short films, because some singers modify their speech toward Attic Greek out of embarrassment about speaking the language of their forebears; authors do the same for similar reasons, while printers often simply did not know the dialect. For example, the word for στενό (narrow) might be written or sung as στενό (steno), but in local pronunciation it was *στινό* (stino).

It has been said that the custom of the *Lazarinis* was, among other things, a festive banquet and a playful social process. Yet everything that takes place within the *Lazarinis*' tradition represents the enactment of instincts, a desire to cooperate with Nature, and a display of pride, elements that proved stronger, though often concealed, than the wishes of the newly arrived religious authority.

These elements remain today, even though they are no longer necessary for the continuation of the species, as a passive reaction to newer forms of pilgrimage and devotion.

Appearance does not necessarily reveal reality.

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